

DEATH in the SHADOW of the "BLACK HAND."

Appalling List of Recent Crimes Shows Spread of the Italian Assassin Society in This Country—Fifty Gangs Whose Members Are Pledged to Kill for Money Known to Exist.

THE amazing revelations brought out by the trial at Wilkesbarre, Pa., of thirteen men charged with crimes committed as members of the Italian "Black Hand" Society may well inspire law-abiding American citizens to seriously ask the question: "How far is this thing to go? What can be done to check this malign spirit of cowardly greed for money that stops not at violence and murder?"

It was shown at the trial that there are not less than fifty societies of the "Black Hand" in this country. The organization flourishes wherever there are a number of Italians, drawing thousands of dollars from the pockets of its victims and leaving in its course a trail of blood and terror.

ONLY eight years ago the first letter of the Black Hand made its appearance in New York city. This letter, as have all the hundreds that have been written since, contained the demand for money or the threat of violence to the person addressed.

"Money or we will murder you!" "Money or we will kidnap your children!" "Money or we will blow you and your home to bits!"

These threats seldom fail, for the victims, who are mainly Italians who have prospered and have the money to pay, have gradually found out that the members of the murderous band mean what they say, and will surely carry out their threats unless the tribute is promptly handed over. When the first letters were received they were not taken so seriously. There are cranks of all classes who write threatening letters, and the Italians of wealth first to receive the dreaded Black Hand missives, with their rude skull and crossbones drawings, paid little heed to them. But they didn't let the letters go unconcerned for long.

Threats Are Carried Out.

One after the other nearly all of the threats were carried out just as the letters said they would be. One New York man was murdered in his home, another in his store, and a third was shot down in the street by a hidden assassin. Half a dozen children disappeared from their homes—kidnaped—and some of these have never been found, murdered, probably, and their little bodies thrown into the river. A bomb blew out the front of one victim's house and the homes and stores of others were fired.

All these crimes and scores of others like them have been committed in New York and Brooklyn in the past four years. Only a few days ago Viago Martone, a wealthy Italian, was fatally wounded in his room in Brooklyn. He has disregarded a Black Hand warning. He felt himself secure in his home, with heavy furniture backed against the locked doors and windows of his room. In the morning he was found in his bed with a bullet in his lungs.

Assassins Growing Bold.

Gradually, despite the utmost efforts of the police, aided by Italian detectives in whom they have confidence, the assassins are growing bolder. When a crime is to be planned, its proposed perpetrators meet in the place least likely to arouse suspicion. Its headquarters are anywhere and everywhere that the criminal elements of the immigrants congregate, and no one is safe once the Black Hand singles him out.

It is estimated by the New York police that the assassins have wrung from their victims half a million dollars and property worth \$100,000 has been wrecked or burned in that city alone since the outrages began. Last January the society got to work at Oyster Bay, the summer home of President Roosevelt. Receiving no money they dynamited the store of their victim almost at the front entrance of the Sagamore Hill estate. In February Justice Cortese, of Paterson, N. J., was killed because he was an enemy of the murderous secret society.

The Black Hand is not the only secret society of criminals now operating in this country. There are also the Mafia and the Reds. The Mafia, however, seek only their enemies, while the Reds are looking for rulers and capitalists only. The Black Hand wars on minor personages for money and nothing else. Thousands belong to the Black Hand at scores in the Mafia and dozens in the Reds.

How Victims Are Approached. The marked victim generally gets four letters. The first is signed with

a single cross, the second with a double cross, the third with a triple cross, and the last with a quadruple cross. The number follows unless payment is prompt, made after this last letter is delivered.

There is a toll between the first and the second letters. Then it is the duty of one of the Black Hand to go to the home of the man that is marked, bearing a letter of introduction from one of the victim's best friends—probably the friend who mentioned him to the Black Hand in the first instance in proof of his title to membership. The real subject of the visit is left until near its close.

Then the caller broaches it in a delicate manner, with many apologies and explanations. He is profuse with advice. It is such a terrible thing and wouldn't it be better to compromise for much less? No compromise? Then perhaps wouldn't he try to get his name out of the white book? No? Then he must be very careful because the Black Hand people are very terrible and might do awful things.

On the heels of this visit follow the other letters. Most of these bear a ring on the little finger, symbolic of the secret organization. The ring is now worn by the supreme leader in Italy, where he has reigned undisputed and immune from arrest for years. There still he directs his subordinates in all parts of the world.

First Leader a Bangai.

About thirty-five years ago the society of the Black Hand was first organized in the city of Palermo, capital of Sicily, by Cappuccia Saggiuceni,

a notorious bandit from the fastnesses of the interior. He went among the poorer classes, inciting them to better their position by making demands for sums of money from the successful merchants of that city.

The first members of the Black Hand were anarchists, and the next branch to spring from it was the much-dreaded Mafia, but in the year 1880 those two organizations quarreled over money matters.

It was at this time that Saggiuceni appeared on the scene and was quickly heralded as a leader. At that time Italy was poverty-stricken, and the entire wealth of the country was in the hands of a selected few. Laborers were paid at the rate of 10 to 12 cents per day and were compelled to toil from sunrise to sunset. He got plenty of converts.

When Saggiuceni first organized his band of outlaws in Palermo he sent agents to all the smaller cities and towns until he had completed his organization. Each year now it is estimated that more than 1,000,000 francs are wrung from the wealthy classes of Italy.

The Society's First Victim.

The first victim of the Black Hand was Francesco Bissell, a wealthy young medical student, who was commanded by threatening letters to kill his father and mother and sister. After committing the deed he was to hand over the sum of 25,000 francs. The young fellow was given twenty-four hours in which to commit the murders, and at the end of that time it became known that he had not obeyed the commands of the letter.

The next day he mysteriously disappeared and his body was discovered some months later at the bottom of a well with a circular belonging to the Black Hand tightly clutched in his right hand. More threatening letters were then sent to the boy's parents, and at last in despair they were compelled to leave the country.

Severe Punishment in Italy.

It is not hard to explain the presence of many of the Black Hand in the United States. This is El Dorado to an Italian. The peasants still believe that they can come here and pick up gold in the streets. They also know that there is no torture here by gendarmes in secret dungeons, and no system of passports and espionage. In Italy, when a man is arrested and even sentenced to one day's imprisonment only, he is compelled to report daily at police headquarters at the end of each day. Thereby he proves

SOME OF THE RECENT CRIMES TRACED TO THE BLACK HAND

February 14—Residence of John di Lessia at 152 Twentieth street, Brooklyn, wrecked by bomb.

February 15—Rev. Charles Padua, a Catholic priest at Free-land, Pa., murdered.

February 22—Mr. and Mrs. Carman Riga, of 10 East 220th street, New York, stabbed in their home.

May 11—Carmine Lemmo killed at 107 Navy street, Brooklyn.

May 28—Peter Gillio, butcher, murdered in Brooklyn.

July 19—Donato Sarrillo shot and killed at New Rochelle, N. Y.

September 3—Convullo Pellicone killed at 2363 Hoffman street, New York.

September 7—Joe Grasso killed at Third and Goerck streets, New York.

September 23—Antonio Paul murdered at 417 East 106th street, New York.

September 27—Tenement at 215 Johnson street, Brooklyn, wrecked by a bomb.

September 28—Home of Salvatore Campisi at 346 East Sixty-third street, New York, wrecked by a bomb.

September 29—Joseph Restriro hacked to death with a hatchet at New Rochelle.

October 12—John Rocco and Giovanni Vetterli stabbed at 165 Hester street.

November 4—Tailor shop of Francesco Messina at 280 Bushwick avenue, Brooklyn, wrecked by a bomb.

November 17—Tenement at 33 Stanton street, New York, wrecked by a bomb.

November 18—James Rosa stabbed in his home in Trenton, N. J.

December 4—Salvatore Giuliano at 331 Stanton street, New York, wrecked by a bomb.

December 11—Salvatore Sterlozza shot to death at 206 Forsyth street, New York.

December 12—Frank Massa shot to death in his home in Bath Beach, while celebrating his birthday.

December 13—Bomb thrown in tenement at 502 East Twenty-ninth street, New York.

December 13—George Brucato, of 38 Stanton street, New York, kidnaped.

December 16—Bomb thrown in tenement at 122 Mott street, 1907.

January 2—Pasquale Mezzetti, of 139 Mulberry street, lez to Jersey City and stabbed sixty times.

January 29—Building occupied by an Italian grocer at Oyster Bay wrecked by a bomb.

January 30—Tenement at 343 East Twenty-fourth street, New York, wrecked by a bomb.

February 8—Judge Robert Cortese, of Paterson, killed, and his son, Robert, badly injured by an infernal machine sent by express; his office wrecked.

February 19—Bomb exploded in tenement 326 East Sixty-first street, New York, throwing 125 persons into a panic and wrecking the hallway.

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an alibi for the day. So when hard pressed the Black Hand bandits flee here.

There is a special inquisition for

black Hand suspects in Italy. They are first dipped into a salt water well, suspended by the ankles. This operation is continued for an hour. Then

they are placed upon a chair filled with sharp spikes. If they still refuse to divulge the information asked for, they are flogged with a whiplash until the blood spurts. Screws are then fitted to the wrists, and, with the hands tightly closed, the pressure is not relieved until the bones in the hands and wrists are almost crushed.

Silence Drove Him Mad.

If they still continue to keep silent, they are cast into a dungeon twenty-five feet beneath the surface of the ground. There they get black bread and water once a day. They are kept closely confined for three days, when

they are brought out and placed in stocks in which it is impossible to move hand or foot. Splinters of bamboo are then driven into the flesh beneath the nails with a mallet. This work is done by the gendarmes. Statistics show that but one man could continue his silence, and he died two weeks later, a raving maniac.

Sword of Damocles Hangs Over Europe

By DR. MAX NORDAU.

EUROPE will not be able very much longer to escape a great and violent rending asunder of its nationalities. The different isolated portions of peoples will either once more join their most representative races or call in their assistance, and with their support overcome the lesser peoples, in the midst of which they happen to be, and whose compulsion they now endure.

The little peoples who share a country with others, and are unable to fall back upon any powerful relatives, are doomed to destruction. They cannot maintain their position in their struggle for existence against their stronger countrymen—as nations they must perish.

Only the great nations will endure, and such of the smaller ones which will be in a position to found an independent, national, political constitution, if necessary expelling or suppressing the foreign popular elements that are settled among them.

The twentieth century can hardly come to an end without seeing the conclusion of this drama in the world's history.

Before then, a considerable portion of Europe will see much distress and bloodshed, many acts of violence and crimes. Peoples will be waged against, and races pitilessly crushed. Side by side with tragedies of human baseness will be played tragedies of lofty heroism. Hordes of cowards will allow themselves to be emasculated without resistance, and brave armies will perish gloriously in fight.

The survivors, however, will then enjoy the full possession of their national rights, and in word and action will always and everywhere be able to be themselves.

The prospect is indeed a gloomy one, but it cannot terrify the man who has become reconciled to the severity of the universal law of life.

Life means struggling, and the power to live gives the right to live.

This law dominates the suns in space equally with the infusoria in stagnant water. It dominates peoples also, and gives to their destinies on this earth that direction from which they cannot be diverted by any hypocritical legislation or any tricky policy, any interests on the parts of some dynasty, or any sharpness on the part of mercenary renegades.

Sentimentality may wipe its eyes at the destruction of a people, but the intelligent man will know that it went down because it did not have the power to endure, and ranks it among those extinct forms of existence which prevailed at a past stage of the world's development.

The Moon a Lost Continent in the Sky

By GARRETT P. SERVISS

THE romance of lost Atlantis is outdone by that of a far greater continent than Atlantis, which, if certain calculations can be trusted, once covered the area at present occupied by the Pacific Ocean, and is now rolling serenely through the sky in the form of our good friend of the night, the moon.

This is not the first time that the suggestion has been made that the moon sprang into being from the site of the Pacific Ocean, but much weight has recently been given to this startling hypothesis by facts and calculations put forth by Professor William C. Pickering. The whole thing might be called a "moon hoax" but for the distinguished abilities and high scientific rank of those who are responsible for the hypothesis on which it is based.

The story begins with the mathematical calculations of Professor George Darwin. In 1879, when he proved that the moon was once a part of the earth, and was separated from it in a remote period in the past when our planet was still in a semi-plastic condition and was rotating with tremendous speed. Through the combined effects of centrifugal force and the tidal action of the sun, a portion of the earth's mass was separated from the main body. The separated portion, in consequence of what Darwin calls "tidal friction," then began gradually to retire from the earth in a spiral curve, at the same time concentrating under the effect of gravity into a globular form. The globe thus formed became the moon.

As soon as Darwin's hypothesis was found to be well based upon mechanical laws, the question arose whether the earth might not still exhibit some mark of the great catastrophe. Such a mark, it was thought, might be found in the shape of a terrestrial globe, and the vast basin of the Pacific Ocean seemed to answer very well to the appearance which a planetary wound of that kind ought to present.

Starting with the assumption that Professor Darwin's hypothesis is correct, Prof. Pickering now shows, by the collection of many known facts, that the basin of the Pacific possesses about the proper shape, situation and size required to satisfy the conditions, provided that we assume that that basin was originally the site of a vast continental mass.

Such a continent would have possessed enough matter to form a globe of the size and density of the moon. The moon, it is to be remembered, has only about one-eighth of the mass and about one-fifth of the size of the earth. Moreover, the average density of the moon is about the same as that which the rocks of a continent like the one described would have possessed.

According to Professor Pickering's view, the earth had a practically solid crust at the time when the moon was thrown off, while its interior was either actually liquid or simply maintained in a quasi solid state by pressure and ready to become liquid as soon as the pressure should be relieved. At a critical moment the centrifugal force operating upon the vast Pacific continental

mass threw it off, tearing and leaving an enormous gap, into which welled up the molten rock of the heated core.

But the lava did not completely or permanently fill the cavity, and in the course of time, as the earth cooled, it was occupied by the waters of the Pacific Ocean.

If there had been any germs of life upon the earth at the moment when the separation took place, some of them would have been carried off to develop subsequently on the moon. Geology finds no indication of the existence of life on the earth until a period far later than that when the moon is supposed to have been thrown off.

Nevertheless, the chemical elements contained in the mass that was separated from the earth would have comprised all those which afterward became combined into organic existences on the mother planet, and, supposing similar conditions to have existed on the moon, they might eventually have given rise to living things there also. So, our escaped continent in the sky may once have possessed (even if it no longer has them) creatures akin in physical nature to the inhabitants of the world, which they abandoned long before their birth into conscious existence.

An item of this catastrophic history which appeals strongly to the imagination is the fact that the Pacific Ocean is rimmed with volcanoes. Nearly all the great volcanoes and volcanic regions of the earth are closely associated with the great circle of its shores.